

## **The Next Step: Comprehensive Biblical Integration**

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### **Abstract**

The seemingly traditional approach to Biblical integration has been a course by course approach dependent on the commitment and ability of the individual professor. Academic programs follow a structure with courses taken in a predefined order that build on the knowledge gained from previous courses with the ultimate goal of accomplishing a predetermined academic purpose, but this paradigm is generally not followed with the Biblical integration in these same academic programs. Perhaps the next step in Biblical integration should be comprehensive Biblical integration within academic programs. Rather than scattering Biblical integration throughout all courses in an academic program, create a progression of building on the Biblical truth presented in each course subsequently arriving at the desired student outcome.

### **The Next Step: Comprehensive Biblical Integration**

As teachers we concentrate on our discipline and particularly on the courses that we teach within our discipline. Those who teach at institutions that integrate the Bible into the academic disciplines focus on incorporating Scripture into the specific courses they teach. Biblical integration is a laborious but fulfilling task, and the depth, applicability, and quality of Biblical integration vary among institutions and professors.

The seemingly traditional approach to Biblical integration has been a course by course approach dependent on the commitment and ability of the individual professor. Chewning (2001) reminds us that

- a) There can be no genuine integration without the help of the Holy Spirit; b) The *mind of Christ* is sufficiently bestowed upon all Christians for their salvation, but much more than the bare minimum of Christ's mind is available to those whom *He calls* to be teachers; c) Integration requires cooperation between the Christian and the Holy Spirit; ... d) There are a variety of styles, methods, processes, or ways by which integration may come to pass ... (p. 114).

This provides a firmly established foundation from which to incorporate Biblical truth into academic disciplines.

How do we assess the effectiveness of Biblical integration? We continually measure student outcomes through different methods, realizing that the desired student outcomes will vary somewhat by institution. What is the desired outcome of integrating the Bible into academic disciplines? Some Christian colleges and universities mention in their vision and mission statements that the institutions embrace challenging the students

to view the world from a Christian perspective. If this is the desired institutional outcome, are the academic programs that integrate Scripture structured to effectively produce the desired outcome of students viewing the world from a Christian perspective?

When Biblical integration is implemented independently by course, there is an absence of an encompassing flow of scriptural thought from course to course in an academic program to assist students in developing a Christian worldview. Academic programs follow a structure with courses taken in a predefined order that build on the knowledge gained from previous courses with the ultimate goal of accomplishing a predetermined academic purpose, but this paradigm is generally not followed with the Biblical integration in these same academic programs.

Is the implementation of Biblical integration in an unconnected progression through the academic courses the most effective model? Perhaps the next step in Biblical integration should be comprehensive Biblical integration within academic programs. Rather than scattering Biblical integration throughout all courses in an academic program, create a progression of building on the Biblical truth presented in each course subsequently arriving at the desired student outcome. “Developing a Biblical worldview takes time, mental energy, diligence, and reliance on God’s words to us” (Barna, 2003, p. 10).

Through comprehensive integration the students should acquire a Biblical foundation enabling them to intellectually and spiritually begin to investigate the essentials of their Christian worldview. Through a systematic coordination of Biblical integration employing various styles and methods of integration (Chewning, 2001), the students are challenged to incorporate Christian character development, utilize Scripture

as a practical source of business principles, include Biblical truth into marketplace practices, and continue their spiritual growth and development. By viewing Biblical integration in a broader conceptual framework, there is a compulsion to look beyond a particular discipline and specific courses and to consider a complete academic program with the focus on the desired outcome at the conclusion of the academic program.

As an example, the following courses are the required courses for a Masters of Business Administration degree at one Christian college:

- Effective Professional Communication
- Ethical Problems in Business
- Principles of Executive Leadership
- Foundations of Business Studies I
- The Legal Environment for Business
- Current Issues in Human Resources
- Advanced Organizational Behavior
- Marketing Management
- Business in a Global Environment
- Organizational Change and Development
- Finance and Accounting for Managers
- Managerial Economics
- Business Policy and Strategy

Rather than using a shotgun approach of scattering Biblical integration throughout all the courses in this academic program, the challenge would be to create a progression of building on the truth presented in each course ultimately arriving at the desired outcome of the development of a personal Christian worldview. George Barna (2003) stated “...since I became a believer some two decades ago, nobody had ever taught me how to develop a Scripture-based worldview to guide every facet of my life” (p.xix).

It cannot be assumed that all students who attend Christian colleges are Christians. For those non-Christian students the shotgun approach of Biblical integration may be difficult to comprehend and subsequently ineffective in producing the intended

outcome of developing a personal worldview. Concurrently, the level of spiritual understanding and development varies greatly among Christian students, and the shotgun approach may not be as effective with these students as would a coordinated progression of Biblical integration. We need to be reminded that “Developing a biblical worldview takes time, mental energy, diligence, and reliance on God’s words to us” (Barna, 2003, p. 10).

Using the aforementioned sequence of courses in a Masters of Business Administration program as the academic framework, the following proposed example is not the only way but is merely an attempt to stimulate thinking in broadening the concept of Biblical integration. There can be various approaches to comprehensive integration and diverse desired outcomes, however Chewning (2001) posits that “there can be no genuine integration without the help of the Holy Spirit” (p. 114) which provides the proper focus for Biblical integration.

The introductory course is Effective Professional Communication which is a study of effective presentation skills necessary for successful business communication including the development of both writing and speaking skills. As a genesis of Biblical integration, a presentation of the Gospel including the importance of personal salvation would expose the student to this vital basic Biblical doctrine. Examine the clarity of the message of salvation, the effectiveness of the communication of the message of salvation through the centuries, the various methods of communicating salvation, and the enduring power of the message. In conjunction with this study research the communication style of Christ during his earthly ministry as a model for effective business communication.

In the course entitled Ethical Problems in Business a Biblically based ethical study would include a comparison of the diverse methods of moral reasoning such as naturalism, utilitarianism, and relativism with a Judeo-Christian approach. These methods of moral reasoning affect a person's worldview. At this point in the academic sequence many of the students would not be familiar with the term Christian worldview, since only nine percent of adult, born-again Christians have a Biblical worldview (Barna 2003). As a part of the Biblical integration define worldview and analyze worldviews by the way in which they answer the three questions posed by Colson and Percy (1999): "Where did we come from and who are we (*creation*)? What has gone wrong with the world (*fall*)? And what can we do to fix it (*redemption*)?" (p.14). Reference from the Bible the answers to these three questions. Examine the world through the lenses of the creation of man, the fall of man, and the redemption of man, and challenge the students to begin thinking about what should be included in a Christian worldview.

The outline of the course, Principles of Executive Leadership, follows the four functions of management: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling. Since these four functions are explicitly illustrated by Nehemiah in the rebuilding of the wall around Jerusalem, the Book of Nehemiah provides a case study of modern management theory from the fifth century BC confirming that all truth is God's truth (Holder and Rollins, 2004). This approach necessitates that the student read the book of Nehemiah and research the application of the four functions of management implemented by Nehemiah. Integrating the Bible into the course in this way typifies the practicality of Biblical truth to the students.

The Biblical integration in these first three courses is laying the foundation on which to build. First, the student has had to reflect on his or her own personal spiritual condition with an introspective look at the Gospel and a contemplative review of the significance of salvation. Second, the student has had to ponder what his or her own worldview is and whether it is a Christian worldview. Third, the student has been exposed to the practicality of applying Biblical principles from the study of Nehemiah.

The course, Foundations of Business Studies I, which concentrates on the fundamental accounting principles essential to managerial decision-making, provides an opportunity for a study of character, particularly godly character. With the current well-publicized character failures of a few prominent business leaders, a study of godly character traits is essential. Concentrate on selected character traits, such as honesty, trustworthiness, truthfulness, accountability, stewardship, and faithfulness, using scriptures that stress the importance of character development. Consequently, the student will realize the importance of character and learn how to develop godly character traits.

The sequence of courses in this program from The Legal Environment for Business through Managerial Economics does not necessarily need to follow in the chronological order as listed. Even though there is no specific sequence for these courses, each of them through the Biblical integration is continuing to build on the truth presented in the courses. These courses require the student to actively use Scripture as a resource for the academic course.

The Legal Environment for Business course presents several alternatives for Biblical integration. One alternative could be a comparison of civil and criminal law with Mosaic Law. Another could be a study of legal justice and Biblical justice and/or a

study of legal litigation and the Biblical process of conflict resolution. A study of law versus grace presents another possibility. An additional alternative could be to research the Biblical concepts relating various legal topics such as employment discrimination, contracts, property rights, conflict resolution, and debt repayment. Through these approaches the student would realize that jurisprudence as is practiced in this country is to an extensive degree based on the Bible and that the Bible can be a relevant and practical guide in addressing legal issues.

Current Issues in Human Resources presents an opportunity for a Biblical perspective on working with other people and through other people as a leader. There are Biblical principles that relate to human resource management issues such as conflict resolution, succession planning, employee training and development, and workplace diversity. Through a study of Christ and the Disciples the student can discern principles for employee training and development and succession planning. Scripture encourages us to love and respect others, and Ephesians 6:9 states "...knowing that your Master also is in heaven; neither is there respect of persons with him" while John 3:16 reminds us that God loves the world and "whosoever" indicates no exclusivity. Jesus and Paul offer examples of conflict resolution. Through this approach students can make immediate application of these Biblical principles in the workplace realizing that principles presented in the Bible can provide guidance in interpersonal relationships.

In *Management by Proverbs* Michael Zigarelli (1999) presents practical management insights from the book of Proverbs that correlate to some of the topics covered in Advanced Organizational Behavior, such as organizational culture, conflict management, attitudes, values, work motivation, job stress, employee performance, and

employee development. Using Zigarelli's book as a companion to the textbook provides a beneficial tool in applying Scripture to organizational behavior concepts. This book is representative of supportive resources that are available written from a Christian worldview with marketplace application. From these types of ancillary materials the student is able to observe a practitioner applying Biblical principles in a real world context.

Karns (2002) presents in the article, "Faith-Learning Integration Exercise: Marketing Principles in the Book of Acts," a learning exercise based on the Book of Acts that presents evidences of the elements of marketing principles in the growth of the early church. This could serve as an effective way of integrating the Bible in Marketing Management with the students being able to observe evidence in the Bible of various aspects of marketing principles such as marketing mix (product, price, place, promotion), market segmentation, strategy, and positioning without misappropriating Scripture (Karns, 2002).

Business in a Global Environment emphasizes the importance of conducting business globally, but how were nations formed? We can see this origin of nations in Genesis 11:1-9 with the building of the Tower of Babel and the resulting creation of languages and the scattering of the people. This is substantiated further in Acts 17:26, "And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation...." Solomon in I Kings illustrates early accounts of international commerce. In the New Testament Paul traveled extensively spreading the Gospel and had an understanding of how to operate effectively in different cultures. Acts 1:8 provides a strategy for a

business to expand globally. There are numerous other examples and applications of Biblical principles relating to international business for the student to discover. Again, by using Scripture the student is viewing the world through a Biblical lens.

The course in Organizational Change and Development provides an opportunity to analyze the Biblical concept of change. In Hebrews 13:8 there is the proclamation, “Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever” which provides stability, dependability, and confidence. Change is found in those who follow Christ as indicated in Romans 12:2, “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God.” Other scriptures such as II Corinthians 4:16 “...being renewed day by day”; II Corinthians 5:17, “...if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold all things are become new”; Ezekiel 11:19 “And I shall give them one heart, and shall put a new spirit within them....”; and Romans 6:4 “Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” all address change. There are accounts of numerous people in the Bible who were changed by their encounter with Christ, such as Paul, Peter, Lazarus, the woman at the well, and the demon-possessed man. The actions of Jesus brought about change - driving the moneychangers out of the temple, His resurrection, His teaching, and His miracles. These Biblical insights of change can correspondingly be related to principles of organizational change.

Since Finance and Accounting for Managers concentrates on the use of financial and accounting methods in decision making and strategy implementation, the importance

of the understanding and accuracy of the information on the four major financial statements is emphasized. Financial statements are basically pieces of paper with numbers on them. Accountants accumulate the numbers and produce these reports. What do these numbers represent? What do they mean? What is the significance of the numbers? On financial statements each number bears significance, since each one indicates something about the organization and its operation. The numbers tell a story. In this course integrate the significance of numbers and what they represent in the understanding of the Bible. For example, one in Scripture represents unity and the nature of God; two represents witness; three is the divine number representing the triune nature of God; and four is the number of creation (Rogers, 2004). This is a way of reinforcing the importance of knowing what financial and accounting methods mean and accurately reporting the numbers so that they relate a valid report to the users of the information. Although this approach does not attempt to relate accounting to Biblical numerology, it is a way of challenging the students in using Scripture and to realize the importance of fully understanding what financial report numbers actually represent.

Managerial Economics is another course in which a companion book to the textbook may prove useful. *Bulls, Bears, and Golden Calves* by John E. Stapleford (2002) affords an introductory perspective into current economic issues with a distinctive scriptural viewpoint. Economic topics such as the role of government in the economy, private property rights, economic growth, unemployment, poverty, investment and interest, and economic efficiency are addressed permitting the student to gain insight into economics and the Bible from a Christian economist. There are other books on

economics written from a Christian perspective that would serve well as companion books and correspond with the academic content of the course.

The capstone course in this program is Business Policy and Strategy. As is the nature of a capstone course, this is one which encapsulates all of the functional areas of business into the decision making process. Since the vision and mission statements indicated that there was a desired outcome, this course, as a capstone, would indicate if the academic and Biblical integration outcomes were fulfilled. As a part of this course the students would submit a comprehensive paper formalizing their personal Christian worldview giving insight into how they arrived at this worldview.

Through the progression of the Biblical integration in the courses in the academic program, the students should have a foundation from the first three courses enabling them to intellectually and spiritually begin to investigate the essentials of their Christian worldview. The subsequent courses have incorporated Christian character development, utilized Scripture as a practical source of business principles, encouraged the inclusion of Biblical truth into marketplace practices, and fostered the spiritual growth and development of the individual.

Since the Biblical integration in this graduate business program has been structured into the academic framework, the students should have the ability to articulate their Christian worldview and could reasonably be expected to complete this assignment. The students would be encouraged to keep an outline of their Christian worldview in a prominent place, such as a framed copy in their office, as a reminder and an encouragement to be diligent in living out their beliefs in the marketplace. This

assignment can be used as an evaluative tool to assess the outcome of developing a Christian worldview.

Comprehensive Biblical integration should provide structure and not restrain or restrict freedom, particularly the freedom of the Holy Spirit to work in the instructor and the students. A key element is for faculty members to work together in developing a comprehensive design for Biblical integration in an academic program. They must arrive at a consensus on the Biblical principles to emphasize in each course to fulfill the desired outcomes, subsequently developing the most effective methods and approaches to accomplish those while allowing for freedom in the fulfillment of the plan. Those personal experiences and teachable moments are in no way eliminated but remain integral ingredients in teaching.

Carla Sanderson, Provost at Union University, said, “In this community, there should be no confusion over goals, administrative goals versus faculty goals, our goals versus their goals. Coming to this understanding is a must for every Christian college faculty of the future” (Dockery & Thornbury, 2002, p. 378). Continuity and coordination of courses are essential elements in academic programs. This is also a demanding challenge in comprehensive Biblical integration, however it is a challenge worthy of undertaking. With a clearly defined desired outcome, a direction is established, and the faculty is then able to focus on putting the pieces together in providing an effective way of producing the desired outcome from comprehensive Biblical integration.

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